

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 5, 7-8, and 10 will have been amended and claims 2-4 and 6 will have been canceled, by virtue of claim 6 having been written into independent form. Additionally, new claims 12-14 will have been submitted for consideration by the Examiner.

Initially, Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for his indication that certified copies of the priority documents have been received. Additionally, Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for attaching the Notice of References Cited and PTO-1449 form, the form having been appropriately initialed by the Examiner to indicate consideration of the respective references.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-3 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (a and b) as being anticipated by SANO et al. (Japanese Patent Publication No. 2002-72106). The Examiner also rejected claims 1-5 and 8-11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over NIIDA et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0045801) in view of MATSUMOTO (U.S. Patent No. 6,318,887). Lastly, the Examiner indicated that claims 6 and 7 were objected to, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant does not acquiesce in the propriety of the Examiner's rejections, but has amended the claims merely in order to advance prosecution. More specifically, Applicant has amended claim 1 by substantially incorporating the recitations of claims 2, 3, 4, and 6 therein and has also amended claim 10 by substantially incorporating the recitations of claims 3, 4, and 6 therein. Applicant has submitted new claim 12 which depends from

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claim 10 and which is similar to claim 7. Additionally, Applicant has submitted new claim 13, which substantially includes the recitations of claims 1, 3, 4, and 6. Further, new claim 14 has been submitted which depends from claim 13 and is similar to claim 7. Lastly, Applicant notes that minor changes have also been made to the language of the claims for enhanced clarity.

Thus, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objections and rejections of the claims, as well as an indication of the allowability of each of the claims in view of the herein-contained remarks.

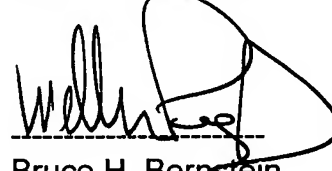
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicant believes that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully request an indication to that effect. Accordingly, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action and allowance of the present application and all the recited claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

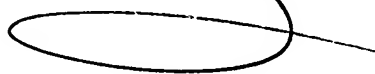
Respectfully submitted,

Masahiko SASAKI

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Pieprz', is written over a horizontal dashed line.

William Pieprz
Reg. No. 33,630

Bruce H. Bernstein
Reg. No. 29,027

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Bruce H. Bernstein, is written below the printed name and registration number.

January 11, 2006
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